

GAE  
March 16, 2009

**Subject:** Commission on Aging, Bill 840

I realize that the GAE Committee heard testimony from many people at the Public Hearing on March 16, 2009. I was not in the state and was unable to submit my testimony and so, am sending it now in hopes that it will be reviewed.

My name is Dianne Stone. I am the Director of the Newington Senior and Disabled Center. I am also the Vice-President and former President of the Connecticut Association of Senior Center Personnel, the former president of the Connecticut Association of Municipal Agents for the Elderly, a delegate to the National Institute of Senior Centers, the Chair of the National Senior Center Accreditation Board and a long term member of the Connecticut Elder Action Network (CEAN). I also sat as a member of the Task Force to Study the Re-Establishment of a Department on Aging.

I list all of these involvements not to establish my credibility but to demonstrate my passion for serving the older adults of our state. It is with this same passion that I urge you to ensure that the Commission on Aging continues to exist.

I understand the current budget crisis. I live it professionally as our municipal budget is squeezed and we accept that we must do more with less. I live it personally as people around me lose their jobs and homes. I also understand that we are currently at the front of a demographic tidal wave that will create challenges in serving an older population unlike any we have seen. You, the legislature, will face policy challenges that will have enormous impact not only on the budget but on the quality of life of our residents. Now, more than ever, we need a strong Commission on Aging to inform and guide our programs and policies.

When the issue of the need for the various commissions has been discussed, there have been concerns that there is overlap with other agencies. Let's be clear on what the role of the Commission on Aging is and, more importantly, what it is not. The Commission is an agency of the legislature that exists to "advocate on behalf of Connecticut's present and future generations of older adults, to serve as an objective, credible source of information on issues affecting them, and to provide accountability within state government." It is not an executive branch department charged with providing a discrete menu of programs and services. There is no other agency, nor will there be, that does the same work as the Commission on Aging. The Commission on Aging and a Department on Aging are not interchangeable.

The Commission on Aging has the ability to reach out to other groups and agencies and has done so with great success. As the lead agency in CEAN, the Commission has brought together advocacy leaders in Connecticut's aging network. The Commission has the capacity to cross department lines to advocate for older adults in areas as diverse as property tax, transportation, housing, and health.

I am sure that you have heard from others who support the Commission on Aging more eloquently and intelligently than I. Let me be direct. As a legislature faced with the challenges of an aging population, you need the Commission on Aging. As a service provider in the aging network, I need the Commission on Aging. Most importantly, the thousands of older adults and the families that support them need the Commission on Aging. I urge you to ensure its survival.

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